

Susan McCaslin

Those Who Make Poetry with Their Lives (for J.A.)

Some listen more than talk, moving
with quite grace through our lives,
joining choirs rather than taking private vocal lessons.

Would to God that all the Lordís people were prophets,^í
said Blake, meaning íartists,^í but art expanded
to include all those anonymous acts
that smooth and oil the world
and move it to the fulcrum like a dancer.

Think of the unknown carvers of stone,
workers in stained glass
who would have called themselves
craftspeople, never asking to have their names
etched for all to see,
never expecting the Governor Generalís Award,
Nobel Prize, or even too much mention
in the ìWhoís Who of College Affairs,^í

people patiently teaching the minutiae of grammar,
and thought, glamour of the public body,
syntax of love, spoken
without too much fuss and bother,

carefully editing the inaccurate and false
from the language that cups us,
quietly shaping policy for the polis,
effective transformers
working their own kind of brave magic,
carrying the elders and the young on their backs

so we can say what we mean
and speak what we speak with clarity
and ease, so our thoughts might be
sane and decent to the core.

Then when the storm comes
and everything is blackened in war,
or chaos carves his mask upon the wall

some voices will still utter yes and
yes, this human life we are.